

# art start

*Local business owners and new residents are helping the Bayshore Arts District in East Naples come to life*

By Cary Barbor | Photography by Michael Caronchi

NAPLES' BAYSHORE ARTS DISTRICT IS ON THE BRINK OF A RENAISSANCE, WITH NEW HOMES AND BUSINESSES RESULTING IN AN INVIGORATED CULTURAL AWARENESS.

Follow U.S. 41 south of downtown Naples, past where it makes a hard left, and take a right on Bayshore Drive. Never been this far south before? Or merely passed through on your way to the Naples Botanical Garden? You're not alone. But slow down and look around. Soon, a bright chartreuse building with a cheery yellow-and-white-striped awning will come into view. That's Three60 Market, and it's the unofficial northern border of the burgeoning Bayshore Arts District. Keep driving south,

and you'll spot a whimsical mural of a mermaid. Inside that structure awaits jewelry designer Amanda Jaron, 46, one of the forces behind this growing arts scene.

When Jaron opens her door and steps out through the mermaid's hair, she sees a young, artsy, affordable community where people bike to the beach. While it was evident during a visit in August that the neighborhood is not there yet—in fact, it has a long way to go—it's also clear that it has a whole lot of potential.





LOCAL ARTIST MARCUS ZOTTER PAINTED MURALS AT AMANDA JARON'S STUDIO AND NAPLES BEACH AND BAY REALTY (BELOW LEFT) IN THE BAYSHORE ARTS DISTRICT.



## Bringing in art

Jaron's neighbor Joel Toledo, 34, owns Green Door Nursery on Bayshore Drive. His family has had the building for about 30 years (it used to be a Cuban cafeteria) so he has a rare perspective on the community. "It's completely transitioning from what it used to be," says Toledo, who is also very committed to bringing the arts to the district.

"We do a big art show, the only one in the area, twice a year," he adds. "It's called Art Among the Blossoms, and we feature jewelers, crafters, pin makers. We try to feature local artists, many of whom are showing their work for the first time."

Toledo aims to attract a younger crowd to the art show and the neighborhood in general. "I would hope for this area to become like Wynwood [the artsy section of Miami], with an eclectic crowd, colorful murals, and a mix of young and old. Young people don't have an arts area in Naples. That's my eventual goal."

Toledo may have to wait on those murals. There are two in the district currently, but the Collier County Community Redevelopment Agency has hit the pause button on approving others. After green-lighting Jaron's mermaid and giant, colorful gardenias on Naples Beach and Bay Realty at 3200 Bayshore Drive, the group



AMANDA JARON



put the brakes on future painting projects.

"I saw that warehouse wall as a huge canvas and commissioned local artist Marcus Zotter to paint it," Jaron says of the space that holds her business. "We've run into a bit of a roadblock on more murals. But I'm working to continue to bring art to the area. There's very little art in the Bayshore Arts District. I want people to know that there is a movement happening here."

For her part, CRA director Debrah Forester explains that the county wants to make sure it has its bearings before moving ahead too quickly. "The Collier County Tourism Development Council is in the middle of a countywide strategic arts plan," she says. "Bayshore has received some funding from them, and we want to make sure we are involved in their strategic arts plan. And then we will see how we can narrow it down to the Bayshore district."

Another opportunity for public art was squashed (though again, possibly only temporarily) when a developer recently backed out of a proposed Cultural Arts Village project. A 17-acre parcel of land on the western border of Sugden Regional Park along Bayshore Drive was slated to include a venue for live theater as well as apartments and condos. Collier County, which owns the land, is now reassessing its options. Its hired TOA Design Group to help update the circa-2000 redevelopment plan that, according to Forester, will incorporate feedback from the community. "We want to look at the vision for the next 20 years and decide what type of projects we want to support," she says. The revamped plan should be going through approvals in late 2018 or early 2019.

## Let's eat

Unlike public art, food seems to be having an easier time coming into existence within Bayshore. Rebecca Maddox, 65, owns Three60 Market and is also developing a food truck park just across the canal from her store. She envisions "an international food village. We'll have Greek, Italian, French, lobster rolls, fresh fish caught that day that you can get cooked to order," and the list goes on. Some trucks will be permanent, while others will be pop-ups. And the bar in the spacious lot will have a pavilion-style roof covering it.

Maddox wants the site to have a vibrancy that includes visual art and entertainment. She plans to put 20 pilings in the canal where boaters can dock. "I'm going to 'give' a piling to each of 20 artists

REBECCA MADDOX (RIGHT), WHO OWNS THREE60 MARKET (TOP LEFT), IS ALSO DEVELOPING A MUCH-ANTICIPATED FOOD TRUCK PARK, WHICH SHE ENVISIONS AS "AN INTERNATIONAL FOOD VILLAGE," IN THE BAYSHORE ARTS DISTRICT. BELOW: A RENDERING OF THE FOOD TRUCK PARK'S BAR, WHICH WILL HAVE A PAVILION-STYLE ROOF.



and let them design them however they like," she says. She'll also enlist jugglers and acrobats to wander around the venue, as well as a soprano to sing arias at the bar as the sun goes down.

Maddox, who has been in business with Three60 Market since 2012, knows the district is ready for what she is offering. "I honestly have never had such a positive reception to anything I've done as the reaction to this food truck park," she says. "I can't get my car fixed, go to the dry cleaner, or talk to a customer without them saying, 'When's the food truck park coming? How about that food truck park?' The anticipation has blown our minds."



RIGHT AND BELOW: RENDERINGS OF ANKROLAB, A LARGE-SCALE MICROBREWERY AND BEER GARDEN, EXPECTED TO OPEN LATER THIS YEAR ON BAYSHORE DRIVE, ADDING TO THE REVITALIZATION OF THE AREA.



BRIAN ARANOWSKI AND JIM BIXLER PURCHASED ONE OF THE FIRST NEW HOUSES ON JEEPERS DRIVE.

Maddox would like to have the park open in time for season this year. “I’m 65; I really don’t need to be taking on a huge project now,” she says. “But the truth is, I love Naples, and I want to leave a gift to the community. I want to leave Naples with something better. That’s why I’m building the food truck park.”

Just across Bayshore Drive, Adam Kelley, 30, is also hoping to add something new to the culinary landscape: Ankrolab, a large-scale microbrewery and beer garden. “We want to be a good hangout,” he says. “We’ll have music and be family-friendly, pet-friendly, you name it.”

On a visit in August, the building was only a skeleton, but Kelley plans to be brewing beer and serving customers by late 2018. A Naples resident since 1998, he’s thrilled to be part of the Bayshore Arts District. “I never knew a neighborhood could be so welcoming,” he says. “I feel like I got so lucky.”

## Moving in

The final element an arts district needs to succeed? People to enjoy and support the art. And that’s where real estate comes in. Realtor David Goebel, 31, is betting that the Bayshore district is the next desirable area in town. He’s working with a local developer who is buying up old homes and empty lots on Jeepers Drive, and a builder who has pursued an analogous project on Van Buren Avenue. They’re constructing stand-alone, island-style cottages ranging in price from \$399,000 to \$700,000. “It’s similar to what builders are doing in downtown Naples, but the lot costs are much lower, so you get more for your money here,” Goebel says. “Also, the trend is moving away from golfing gated communities.”

As of August, he had sold three homes on Van Buren and five homes on Jeepers. While the new homes on Jeepers are charming and attractive, they do sit cheek by jowl with unkempt trailer homes behind chain-link fencing. It’s a street in the midst of a stark transition.

Jim Bixler, 50, and his husband, Brian Aranowski, 62, bought one of the first new houses on Jeepers in April. Now fully moved in, they say they love it. They’d lived in a gated community in North Naples for 17 years but were getting tired of the high fees. “We were just casually looking online, and we saw this house,” Aranowski says. “We liked the urban, eclectic vibe of the street.”

They also appreciated the idea of a neighborhood interested in the arts. Aranowski is the founder and artistic director of the chamber classical vocal group Genesis Ensemble. Bixler, a horticulturist for Third Street South in Naples, relishes the old-neighborhood feeling elicited by the big palms lining the street. And all the new homes, including theirs, have front porches to



BAYSHORE ARTS DISTRICT IS ALSO EXPERIENCING GROWTH IN NEW HOME CONSTRUCTION, WITH STAND-ALONE, ISLAND-STYLE COTTAGES ALREADY UP ALONG JEEPERS DRIVE AND VAN BUREN AVENUE.



encourage interaction among residents. As the area grows, they look forward to a “walkable, urban neighborhood,” Bixler says. “We love the unique homes, being so close to downtown, and the idea of building an arts community.”

For those invested in the district, change can’t come soon enough. “Bayshore always had the stigma of being low income, high crime, and not a great area,” says Toledo of Green Door Nursery. Going back decades, he says, “We always heard ‘Bayshore’s up and coming,’ and nothing ever happened. But now all of a sudden, it’s like an explosion. Now it’s completely changed.” ◀